



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>People Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>29 August 2023</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Policing &amp; Trauma event summary and next steps</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Amanda Coulthard, Head of Strategy &amp; Performance, SPA</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**PURPOSE**

This report provides an overview of the Policing & Trauma event which took place in April 2023, delivered by the Authority with support from SPA Forensic Services and Police Scotland.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Scottish Police Authority convened an event in April 2023 focused on policing and trauma. This followed a commitment made in December 2022, during an event on mental health, vulnerability and policing, to convene a stakeholder event on policing and trauma specific to our workforce. These events build on discussions and evidence sessions throughout 2022 and 2023 on the issue of mental health both in relation to demand and also specific to our own workforce.
- 1.2 This [trauma focused event](#), chaired by Fiona McQueen on behalf of the Authority, aimed to:
- Bring together research, insights and knowledge on approaches to prevent, manage and minimise the impact of work based trauma on individuals' physical and mental wellbeing;
  - Recognise that, while the removal of traumatic experiences completely is not possible and that each individual is effected in a different way, there are steps that can be taken to prepare officers and staff for those inevitable events;
  - Describe the work being taken forward by Police Scotland and SPA Forensic Services in this area, exploring case studies and the lessons learned, and invite discussion on the effectiveness of the current approaches from across different agencies and jurisdictions;
  - Recognise this issue in the context of a growing challenge, not only to policing but to other emergency services, first line responders and the parallels to the roles performed by our armed forces;
  - Share current and best practice and identify successful innovation in dealing with the challenges which could enhance the current approaches taken in the policing system; and
  - Provide an opportunity to network and learn more about current providers used across the policing system.

## 2. EVENT OVERVIEW

- 2.1 In convening the event, the Authority wanted to demonstrate a commitment to understanding and addressing issues regarding the impact of trauma, listening to lived experience and sharing learning of current practice across public bodies, as well as learning from expert research and insights from across the world.

- 2.2 The event focused on three key considerations:
- What can the Authority, Forensic Services and Police Scotland learn from elsewhere?
  - What currently works well in the policing system in Scotland?
  - Where could we improve?
- 2.3 A range of stakeholders and partners supported the event through attendance and contribution. Critically there were a range of staff and officers in attendance, it wouldn't have been possible to deliver such a positive, and challenging, event without the support of our workforce, unions, and staff associations.
- 2.4 Key speakers at the event included Audrey Nicoll MSP, Dr Karen Goodall of University of Edinburgh, Gill Moreton of Lifelines Scotland, Dr Jess Miller of Police Care UK, and Vernon Herron of Baltimore Police Department. Additionally, delegates heard from partners such as Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service and Walking with the Wounded.
- 2.5 Event evaluation highlights that the most impactful session of the programme for most attendees was hearing from officers and staff directly. The sharing of lived and personal experience of trauma as a result of delivering their role from four representatives of our workforce was a very powerful reminder of the value of the event itself, and a reaffirming of the need to focus on continually improving support to officer and staff.

### **3. EMERGING THEMES AND NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1 Full detail of the key themes identified through discussion can be found in the event summary at appendix A. Delegates were keen to use academic research and insights to further refine practice, to roll out pockets of good practice across the organisation and continue to challenge stigma around mental ill health.
- 5.2 A series of commitments were made in response to the event, which are detailed in appendix A. These focus on putting in place, across the policing system, a whole system approach to prompting wellbeing and preventing trauma. Progress against these commitments will be reported through committee as action areas develop in line with ongoing work within the People and Development function. Further detail on timescales for delivery of these actions will be provided to November committee.

**6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

**7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications as a result of this report.

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

**9. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

**10. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no social implications in this report.

**11. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

11.1 There are no community implications in this report.

**12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 EDI is embedded in this area of work. All appropriate assessments will be completed, mitigating actions undertaken and inclusive, accessible engagement will be in place.

**13. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Paper submitted to People Committee members for discussion.



## Policing & Trauma Conference – Event Summary and Next Steps

### Background

The Scottish Police Authority made a commitment in December 2022, during an event on mental health, vulnerability and policing, to convene a stakeholder event on policing and trauma specific to our workforce. This builds on discussions and evidence sessions throughout 2022 and 2023 on the issue of mental health both in relation to demand and also specific to our own workforce.

The safety and wellbeing of our people is at the heart of our commitments. A career in policing is rewarding, but can also be incredibly challenging. Our Joint Strategy for Policing states: *"The emotional wellbeing of our people is as equally important as ensuring their physical wellbeing. We want our people to feel supported and empowered to seek help from colleagues and support services no matter the situation. There is a range of support available to our officers and staff. We will ensure that these support channels are easily accessible and available to all in their time of need"*.

In order to demonstrate our commitment to understanding and addressing issues regarding the impact of trauma we must listen to lived experience and discuss our current practices, this, coupled with expert research and insight will ensure that any new approaches to support and advice for our officers and staff are evidence-led.

This trauma focused event, chaired by Fiona McQueen on behalf of the Authority, aimed to:

- Bring together research, insights and knowledge on approaches to prevent, manage and minimise the impact of work based trauma on individuals' physical and mental wellbeing;
- Recognise that, while the removal of traumatic experiences completely is not possible and that each individual is effected in a different way, there are steps that can be taken to prepare officers and staff for those inevitable events;

- Describe the work being taken forward by Police Scotland and SPA Forensic Services in this area, exploring case studies and the lessons learned, and invite discussion on the effectiveness of the current approaches from across different agencies and jurisdictions;
- Recognise this issue in the context of a growing challenge, not only to policing but to other emergency services, first line responders and the parallels to the roles performed by our armed forces;
- Share current and best practice and identify successful innovation in dealing with the challenges which could enhance the current approaches taken in the policing system; and
- Provide an opportunity to network and learn more about current providers used across the policing system.

## **Event Summary**

Fiona McQueen welcomed delegates to the events and set the context for the day before handing over to Deputy Chief Constable Fiona Taylor and Scottish Government Criminal Justice Committee Convenor Audrey Nicoll MSP for opening remarks which focused on a recognition of the challenges often faced by officers and staff in delivery of their duties and the ongoing focus of both Police Scotland and the Parliament on officer and staff wellbeing.

All opening remarks recognised the impact that delivery of core responsibilities within the policing system can and does have on the mental health and wellbeing of officers and staff, and the need to address these challenges in the widest possible sense – recognising the collaboration and collective action required.

Session one of the day gave an overview of the nature of trauma and its impacts. Delegates heard from Dr Karen Goodall of the University of Edinburgh and Gill Moreton from the Rivers Centre of NHS Lothian. Karen's presentation on trauma informed approaches in policing drew on relevant research projects conducted with officers, explaining how exposure to adverse childhood experiences can increase likelihood of mental health conditions and is associated with higher work stress within policing. Gill gave delegates an overview of the lifelines Scotland model which is an approach to supporting the wellbeing of Scotland's emergency services community, through a public health and preventative approach to helping officers and staff stay well.

In the final input of session one delegates heard from four colleagues from across the policing system. Scott, Jason, Laura and David shared their own personal and lived experience on how exposure to trauma in delivery of their role impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. They stressed that often it's not one 'big event' but a culmination of the day to day which impacts on individual wellbeing.

Session two looked at how organisations currently approach workforce trauma, with inputs from SPA Forensic Services, Scottish Ambulance Service, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland and Walking with the Wounded. Delegates heard about current supports such as Trauma Risk Management (TRiM), peer support networks, staff engagement, and post incident supports. Speakers also outlined current wellbeing strategies in place across organisations, and work to focus on the proactive building of resilience across the workforce.

After lunch delegates heard (through video input) about practice in other jurisdictions from Jess Miller, Police Care UK, and Vernon Herron of Baltimore Police Department. This focused on sharing insights from research and practice from different systems.

Delegates then had the opportunity to reflect on all they had heard over the course of the day, focusing on what we can learn from elsewhere, what currently works well and what we could look to improve on.

## **Emerging Themes**

A number of key themes were gathered through the roundtable discussion at the event:

### What can we learn from elsewhere?

- Use academic research and insights - the wider content for trauma
- Invest in training and service provision – make it everyone's role
- Need to focus on prevention and mainstream this
- Taking an opportunity to 'decompress' after traumatic incidents
- Look at adopting the question set/ checklist model used in SFRS
- Introduce psychological supervision; a culture of 'its ok not to be ok'

### What currently works well?

- Peer support (such as muster room chats) and welfare provision
- Identifying posts likely to be higher risk to ensure appropriate supports are in place
- Pockets of good practice in local policing divisions – widen this out
- Little Things Campaign
- Support from Police Treatment Centre
- Capability manager within Forensic Services – could this roll out?

What could we improve on?

- Culture can still be a challenge, especially stigma
- Everyone is busy, so maybe not picking up on early signs
- Put in place psychological support training for all officers and staff
- Improve culture of asking colleagues 'are you ok'?
- Empower first line managers to respond in person centred ways
- More training for all staff and officers, focus for line managers

**Next Steps**

Fiona McQueen closed the event by thanking all contributors, especially those staff and officers who took to the stage to share personal experiences, and committing to the publication of an event summary which includes next steps. This will reflect some of the developing models described during the day, as well as picking up on suggestions and feedback from the roundtable discussions.

The event focused how the policing system supports frontline staff to prepare for the traumatic experiences their role presents them with and how the organisation supports them to maintain personal wellbeing and minimise the adverse impact of those experiences. The Authority and Police Scotland are working closely to development meaningful commitments focused on the wellbeing of our people.

This includes:

- Putting in place, across the policing system, a whole system approach to promoting wellbeing and preventing trauma
- Independent review of current systems, services and processes for supporting officer and staff wellbeing
- Work with key external stakeholders to scope the end to end process for supporting officer and staff wellbeing
- Building on recommendations from the forthcoming HMICS frontline focus assurance review
- Continue to deliver on Royal Foundation commitments and standards
- Development of the Mental Health Strategy
- Investment in leadership development activity
- Progressing tenders for Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme
- Wellbeing champions relaunch

Presentations and video inputs from the event have been [published on the Authority website.](#)